

Hello, I'm Glenn McConnell, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Redistricting Subcommittee.

Welcome to the South Carolina Senate's redistricting website. We hope you find it helpful and that it gives you the information you need to become a participant in the redistricting process.

Every ten years, the federal government takes a census. This is required by the United States Constitution and has been done since 1790. Those of you who have used census records in genealogy research know how valuable the information is from an historical standpoint.

The census is also important for drawing fair and effective election districts.

In South Carolina, the General Assembly is responsible for drawing three types of election districts:

- (1) for 46 State Senate seats;
- (2) for 124 State House of Representatives seats; and
- (3) for South Carolina's delegation to the United States House of Representatives.

This is accomplished by passing legislation that contains the redistricting plans for each type of election district.

We must redistrict every ten years to comply with the constitutional requirement of equal representation. The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees that each person's vote must have the same

weight as another's. You may have heard this called "one person, one vote."

In order to comply with this requirement, each South Carolina Senate district must contain a substantially equal population. Similarly, each South Carolina House seat must contain a substantially equal population. The federal Constitution also requires that, to the extent practicable, each of our Congressional districts must contain equal population.

As the census numbers reveal changes in how many people live in our state and where they live, district boundaries must be adjusted in order to comply with the requirement of equal representation.

South Carolina's redistricting plans also must comply with the requirements of Sections 2 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act, as well as federal case law prohibiting racial gerrymandering. Links to more information about redistricting law can be found on our website.

In addition, we're waiting to hear if our state's population has grown enough so that we gain another seat in the United States House of Representatives. South Carolina's excellent response rate of 73% -- an eight point improvement over the 2000 census -- makes the gain of a new seat in Congress a real possibility.

The redistricting process will begin when the results of the census are released next spring, no later than April 1, 2011.

In the State Senate, the Judiciary Committee's Redistricting Subcommittee will do much of the necessary work to develop proposals for new districts.

How can you participate in this process?

You've taken the first step by viewing this website. Keep informed through this website and other media sources about the Senate Judiciary Committee's Redistricting Subcommittee. Learn about the subcommittee's schedule, when it will be holding public hearings, and how it will be receiving information and testimony. If you are unable to attend a hearing, visit our website to see other ways to submit your comments.

Second, think about what you would like to tell the subcommittee about your community and its representation.

Third, be an effective communicator. Make the necessary contacts to let the subcommittee staff know that you would like to be heard or have the information you provide considered by the subcommittee. Find out how the subcommittee needs to receive the information. Make your points clearly and concisely. Be prepared to answer questions.

Finally, encourage others to be involved in this process.

I hope you will find this website a good resource. On it, we will announce hearings, as well as provide access to census data, proposed plans, and other information. You may also sign up on the site to receive e-mailed notices of meetings and other announcements.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you during the redistricting process.